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Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-07

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /008 R

66623
DRAFTED BY:EA:ANP:JCDORRANCE
APPROVED BY:EA:ANP:LJMOSER
---------- 009587
R 031946Z JUL 74
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO HICOMTERPACIS SAIPAN

UNCLAS STATE 144022

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM CANBERRA DATED JUNE 28, 1974 SENT SECSTATE WASHDC INFO PORT MORESBY IS REPEATED TO YOU: QUOTE

UNCLAS CANBERRA 4096

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, PP
SUBJ: PNG: HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY MEETING, JUNE 24, 1974

REF: A) CANBERRA 3721 B) CANBERRA 3624 C) CANBERRA A-85

1. SUMMARY: HOUSE OF ASSEMPLY MEETING BEOINNING JUNE 24 APPARENTLY HAS CONCLUDED THAT DECEMBER 1, 1974, IS NO LONGER REALISTIC DATE FOR PNG INDEPENDENCE. INSTEAD, IT WILL BE DECIDED THAT INDEPENDENCE CANNOT BE PROCLAIMED BEFORE PNG HAS A WRITTEN CONSTITUTION APPROVED BY THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY. THE NET RESULT APPEARS TO BE THAT THE PNG INDEPENDENCE DATE WILL SLIP SEVERAL MONTHS, I.E., TO MID-1975 AND PERHAPS LONGER SHOULD DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF THE CONSTITUTION BE A CAUSE OF FURTHER DELAY.

2. PNG GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN RELATIVELY RAPID ACTION TO DISPEL IMPLICATIONS OF RECENT STUDENTS AND WOMEN'S DEMONSTRATIONS TO AT LEAST LOOK INTO GRIEVANCES OF THESE GROUPS. IN ANY CASE, HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SESSION APPEARS TO HAVE OVERCOME LOCAL DEMONSTRATIONS IN PORT MORESBY AS SOURCE OF NEWS FOR AUSTRALIAN MEDIA. END SUMMARY.
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3. AUSTRALIAN NEWS REPORTING ON HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SESSION WHICH BEGAN JUNE 24 IN PORT MORESBY HAS BEEN ABUNDANT BUT SOMEWHAT CONFUSED. COMING AS IT DID WITHIN WEEKS OF STUDENT UNREST AND PORT MORESBY DISTURBANCES OVER FOOD PRICES REPORTED REFTELS, THE STAGE WAS SET FOR CONCERNED DEBATE OVER THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES IN HANDLING OF AFFAIRS GENERALLY. THE SPECIFIC GRIEVANCES BY THE STUDENTS HAVE BEEN SETTLED TEMPORARILY BY REFERRING THE MATTER TO A COMMITTEE. THE PORT MORESBY HOUSEWIVES' DEMONSTRATIONS ABOUT THE HIGH COST OF LIVING ARE BEING DEALT WITH BY THE CABINET, WHICH WITHIN A FEW DAYS OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS ANNOUNCED CUTS IN IMPORT DUTIES AND PROFIT MARGINS ALLOWED TO BOTH WHOLESALERS AND RETAILERS AND STRICTER PRICE CONTROL. IN SUM, THE GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO HAVE TAKEN SOME INITIAL ACTION TO ALLAY CRITICISM ON BOTH MATTERS.

4. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, THE LONG-AWAITED CONSTITUTIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE'S REPORT WAS TABLED IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY ON JUNE 27. IT IS REPORTEDLY AN INCOMPLETE DOCUMENT SINCE ONLY FIVE OF THE 17 CHAPTERS HAVE BEEN PRINTED. AT THE SAME TIME, IT APPEARS THAT CHIEF MINISTER SOMARE AND HIS DEPUTY, DR. JOHN GUISE, TABLED WHAT IS DESCRIBED AS A MINORITY REPORT. WHILE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO DOCUMENTS ARE NOT REPORTED IN DETAIL IN THE PAPERS HERE, IT SEEMS THAT THE SOMARE-GUISE REPORT SUGGESTS MUCH SHORTER CONSTITUTION THAN THE CPC VERSION AND WOULD LIBERALIZE THE RATHER STRINGENT CITIZENSHIP PROPOSALS CONTAINED IN THE CPC REPORT WHICH WERE LEAKED TO THE PRESS SOME TIME AGO (REF C). DEBATE ON THE TWO REPORTS IS NOW SCHEDULED FOR THE NEXT MEETING OF THE HOUSE BEGINNING IN AUGUST.

5. IN MID-WEEK, THERE WERE INDICATIONS FROM CANBERRA SOURCES THAT DISCUSSION OF DEC 1, 1974 AS THE DATE FOR PNG INDEPENDENCE HAD BEEN OVERCOME BY OTHER EVENTS. IT WAS REPORTED THAT THE CONSERVATIVE PEOPLES PROGRESS PARTY, A MEMBER OF THE GOVERNING COALITION, HAD COLD FEET OVER ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPOSED DATE. AT THE SAME TIME, IT APPEARED THAT MINISTER FOR COMMERCE EBIA OLEWALE HAD HELD AT LEAST TWO MEETINGS WITH OTHER PAPUAN LEADERS WHICH SUGGESTED THAT HE WOULD BE HARD PUT TO SUPPORT DEC 1 AS THE DATE FOR INDEPENDENCE. OLEWALE'S FAINT-HEARTEDNESS IS DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTED TO THE INCREASED POPULARITY OF THE PAPUA BESENA MOVEMENT HEADED BY JOSEPHINE ABAIJAH WHICH OPPOSED CONTINUED
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ASSOCIATION OF PAPUA WITH NEW GUINEA. IN ANY CASE, IT APPEARED AT MID-WEEK THAT THE DEC 1 DATE WOULD, AS A MINIMUM, HAVE TO BE SLIPPED FOR SEVERAL MONTHS.

6. EVENTS SINCE THAT TIME HAVE TENDED TO EMPHASIZE CHIEF MINISTER SOMARE'S AGREEMENT TO THE PROPOSITION THAT PNG SHOULD NOT BECOME INDEPENDENT WITHOUT FIRST HAVING A WRITTEN CONSTITUTION. THE SUGGESTION AGAIN IS THAT SOMARE AND UNITED PARTY LEADER TEI ABAL

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REACHED A COMPROMISE WHICH WOULD PROVIDE UNITED PARTY SUPPORT FOR AN EARLY INDEPENDENCE DATE IF A CONSTITUTION HAS BEEN APPROVED BEFORE THE DATE ARRIVES. IT IS POSSIBLE, ALTHOUGH NOT CLEAR FROM THIS DISTANCE, THAT SOMARE WILL NOT FORMALLY PROPOSE DEC 1 BUT WILL INSTEAD SUGGEST THE HOUSE ACCEPT A RESOLUTION WHICH TIES THE INDEPENDENCE DATE TOGETHER WITH THE PRIOR ACCEPTANCE OF A PNG CONSTITUTION.

7. THERE IS NO HINT IN ANY OF THIS REPORTING THAT SOMARE HAS ABANDONED HIS GOAL OF ACHIEVING AN EARLY INDEPENDENCE DATE FOR PNG. HE HAS APPARENTLY BEEN SLOWED DOWN, HOWEVER, BY THE POSITIONS TAKEN ON EARLY INDEPENDENCE BY ALL THREE FACTIONS NOTED ABOVE; THE UNITED PARTY, THE PEOPLES PROGRESS PARTY, AND THE PAPUAN MEMBERS OF HIS COALITION GOVERNMENT. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, IT IS NOW EXPECTED THAT THE DATE FOR PNG INDEPENDENCE WILL SLIP FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, I.E., UNTIL MID-1975, AND EVEN LATER SHOULD HOUSE AGREEMENT TO NEW CONSTITUTION INTRODUCE DELAY IN ACCEPTING NEW DATE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
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Draft Date: 03 JUL 1974
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Event:
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